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Title: Need to extend the Rights and Privileges to Dalit Christians.

SHRI A.V. BELLARMIN (NAGERCOIL): Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the Government over the reasonable demand of the Dalit Christians for the extension of social justice and equal opportunities guaranteed to other Dalits for them also. It is to be noted that nearly 70 per cent of the Christians of the country are Dalit Christians. These people belonging to the downtrodden and neglected section of the society are being discriminated in two ways. One, as Minority Christians and other as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. They should not

*English translation of the speech originally delivered in Tamil.

be treated as sinners for the simple reason that they embraced Christianity out of certain social compulsion for generations. The sacred Constitution of India guaranteed every citizen a fundamental right to embrace any religion of his choice. It is a mystic irony that while the Dalits who have embraced neo Buddhism or Sikh religion are enjoying the rights and privileges applicable to Dalits, Dalits who are following Christian faith are totally denied those rights and privileges.[\[a79\]](#)

The crude facts that cannot escape the attention of the Government are that the slain and the victims of the attacks perpetrated by the religious fanatics are the *dalits*. The majority of victims in the Orissa raids bear testimony to the ugly fact. Further, the Acts and legislations providing protection against atrocities on the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe people are denied to the *dalit* Christians despite a number of court verdicts directing the Government to extend the same. So, the *dalit* Christians should be guaranteed the rights and privileges applicable to *dalits* by bringing forward a suitable enactment. Thank you.